

## [Beecher Lank]

[Interview?]

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Beecher Lank

New Mexico Cowboy Bootmaker

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Beecher Lank, New Mexico cowboy bootmaker was born at La Fayette, Indiana on May 11, 1851. He has been making boots sixty-nine of the eighty-seven years of his life.

He was seventeen years of age when he first began making his way in the world by selling newspapers. He remembers selling over two hundred and fifty papers on the day, May 19, 1868, that General Grant was unanimously nominated for the presidency.

In 1869, when he was eighteen, he began making boots in Kansas City, Missouri, and while working continuously at bootmaking he gradually made his way west. He made cowboy boots for many years in Texas and for a while in Arizona before coming to Roswell, New Mexico in 1914. He has made cowboy boots continuously for over twenty-four years, at Amonett's - the oldest saddle and boot shop in Roswell and southeast New Mexico.

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For more than an average life time Mr. Lank has bent over machines patiently working out beautiful designs in decorative stitching, and carefully shaping and building sturdy arches for as fine boots as can be made any where in the United States. 18 6/5/41 - N. Mex.

When he first began making boots in Kansas City Ulysses S. Grant was president of the United States. There was no Roswell in New Mexico and the Chisums were blazing the trails for the first herds of cattle that were brought from Texas to the Pecos Valley, and John Chisum had not yet established the famous Jingle-Bob Ranch at the head of South Spring River, six miles southeast of what is 2 now Roswell. Mr. Lank cannot give even an approximate number of the tho'usands of boots he turned out during the years when a cowboy was judged by the boots he wore.

"Things are different now," he said, "since the cattle business is not the most important industry in this part of the country, but I am still making lots of fine boots for the old cattle men who want the real cowboy boots they can be proud of, and that can be worn in comfort."

"I don't work as fast as I used to but I will show you I can still do a good job."

The boots, he proudly brought out for inspection, proved indeed, that he not only could "do a good job" on their construction but that he was a master of the trade of which he has made an art, anyone might be proud of mastering.

"I can make all kinds of boots," said Mr. Lank, "fancy ones like these or plain ones, and I make shoes too. I don't work as fast tho'ugh as I used to when I was younger for I am getting old and slowing up. I like to make them - like to think about who will wear them when they are finished, and try to imagine what kinds of places they will be worn in, but I am getting tired. I would like to rest for the years I have left to live if I didn't have to pay for part of my keep. I get a little old age pension but its just enough to pay my landlady. I board with Mrs. Long at 205 E. 7th Street."

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When asked if he didn't have any relatives he replied: "I don't know. I was married and had a daughter, Pearl. I don't know where she is now, or if she's still living or not. I married a girl named Jennie Moore but she died a long time ago I don't remember 3 when."

"No." He replied, when asked if he could tell any stories of interest that have happened in his life.

"I don't remember things very well anymore. I saw Grant and heard him speak in Kansas City in 1880. I saw McKinley there too, and Teddy Roosevelt."

When asked if he liked Roswell he said, "Yes, and I like to work for Mr. Amonett. He is always good to me, and all the other workers make it as easy for me as they can. Everybody I know is good to me."

His patient kind eyes lighted up in appreciation as he talked of kindness shown him. He was gentle and pleasant and smiled all the time he talked during our interview showing a [mouth?] full of strong white teeth - all his own, which is remarkable for a man of his age. He doesn't wear glasses either except for reading and close-up work.

"Oh yes," he said, I forgot I did have something interesting happen in my life. Just a month or two ago. I got a letter from Governor Clyde Tingley - a birthday letter. Here it is", he said, "read it."

I took it from him and read the few kind words that cheered and made happier the old man who had been alone for many of these last birthdays of his life that should have been made happier.

"Now wasn't that a fine thing for our Governor to remember an old man like me on his birthday?"

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"It was indeed!" was my reply, and I truly tho'ught it was. The letter dated May 11, 1938, is given below:

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Dear Mr Lank:

Congratulations on your eighty-seven eighty-seventh birthday!

Mrs. Tingley and I sincerely hope that you may enjoy many more happy birthdays.

Cordially Yours

Clyde Tingley

The kind birthday wishes of Governor and Mrs. Tingley find an echo in the hearts of the many Roswell friends of Mr. Lank.

Source of Information

From a personal interview with Mr. Lank himself - Roswell, N. M.